

June 10, 2005

FEDERAL LANDS RECREATION ENHANCEMENT ACT (REA) SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The Recreation Fee Leadership Council (Fee Council) approved an Implementation Plan in December 2004. Membership of the Fee Council includes senior policy-level officials from DOI and USDA.

A Steering Committee composed of senior agency staff oversees day-to-day implementation. In addition, technical working groups for each of the key areas in the Act were created. These include the following:

- ATB pass working group;
- Fee Collection/Fee Expenditure working group;
- Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RACs)/Public Participation working group; and
- Communications working group.

COMPLIANCE WITH REA

All of the agencies have issued guidance to their field locations and made appropriate changes concerning compliance with the Act.

FEE COLLECTIONS/FEE EXPENDITURES

The agency representatives worked with their respective budget offices to receive approval from Treasury for a simplified account structure titled "Recreation Fee Enhancement Program."

The agencies have reached consensus on defining certain terms in the Act. These definitions are expected to be finalized and provided to field locations during the coming weeks.

The USDA FS has removed 480 sites (out of a total of 4,493 sites that were previously in the Fee Demo program) from its fee program. BLM eliminated fees for overlooks at Imperial Sand Dunes (CA); eliminated fees at undeveloped sites at Orilla Verde Recreation Area (NM); increased the number of sites that accept national passes from 12 to 28; eliminated the youth fee at Piedras Blancas (CA) visitor center; and eliminated the youth fee at Cape Blanco Lighthouse (OR). FWS eliminated fees at Gavins Point NFH (SD). Few changes are expected at NPS sites. However, there are a few NPS sites that are still completing the process of evaluating consistency issues related to pass acceptance and interagency coordination.

NPS has completed a review of all previously approved spending projects (12,000). Approximately 1,500 projects were evaluated by Regions and Parks to ensure that project expenditures did not include threatened or endangered species monitoring or employee bonuses. The NPS is currently reviewing newly submitted projects to ensure compliance with the new law.

RECREATION RACs/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Recreation RAC/public participation team has drafted interagency guidelines for public involvement. The draft guidelines have been reviewed by the USDA Office of General Counsel and DOI Solicitor's Office. A Federal Register notice is being prepared to seek public comments on these guidelines. The goal is to publish this notice by the end of June.

A series of alternatives for how the Recreation RACs might be organized has been prepared. BLM and the USDA FS will begin to discuss these alternatives with stakeholders in the coming weeks.

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL (ATB) PASS

The most complex and time consuming aspect of REA implementation relates to the establishment of the new ATB pass. A target date of 2007 has been established to implement the ATB pass taking into account the time needed to host listening sessions to receive public input on implementation, to hold a competition for the image to be placed on the pass, to conduct studies and surveys on price, use, and benefits associated with the pass, and to complete the contracting process for ATB pass implementation.

Two external listening sessions with stakeholders were conducted February 11th and February 15th. One or more listening sessions are planned for disability advocacy groups in early June to hear concerns and suggestions about documentation requirements. The agencies will hold additional sessions, as appropriate.

An interagency workshop was conducted on 3/15-3/17 on operational aspects of the pass.

Work is underway to initiate data collection efforts to assist in pricing the ATB pass. A notice of intent to collect information has been prepared and is in the internal clearance process. The notice will be published in the Federal Register. After the required 60-day period has elapsed, an information collection package will be submitted to OMB for clearance.

In the coming weeks, the Department plans to sign an agreement with GovWorks for assistance in contracting to acquire the goods and services necessary to implement the ATB pass. Subsequent to the signing of this agreement, a request for information (RFI) will be developed and market research will be conducted. The contracting officer and the ATB workgroup will define the acquisition process, identifying the Source Selection Evaluation Team and Source Selection Authority. An interagency funding agreement will also be drawn up and signed by participating agencies and bureaus. The target date for completing the interagency funding agreement is June 24, 2005. Once the market research has been completed a Statement of Work/Performance Work Statement will be prepared. It is anticipated that the Statement of Work/Performance Work Statement would be issued in early fall and proposals be received and evaluated by the end of 2005.

The image on the first ATB pass will be an ATB-appropriate image emerging from the ongoing image contest administered by the NPF. No decision has been made concerning the nature of, and how to acquire, images for the 2008 and beyond ATB passes.

Preparation of interagency guidelines on the price of the ATB pass, the benefits provided, marketing and design, adequate documentation for age and disability discounts, the issuance of passes to volunteers, and the distribution of costs and revenues is underway. The target date for completion is fall 2005.